

On December 2, the Soviet met in the hall of the Free Economic Society. Although I was not fit for any revolutionary work, I went to the meeting, partly out of curiosity, partly to be with friends at a time when everything hung in the balance. The meeting opened with a lengthy report of the Executive Board. I could not follow it word for word, but it impressed me as a piece of daydreaming. The reporter—it may have been Trotsky—intoxicated with his own oratory, elaborated on the plan to force the government to surrender by issuing a manifesto that would bring about its bankruptcy.

This manifesto called on the people of Russia to boycott bank notes and ask for payment in gold and silver in all transactions, to withdraw their deposits from the banks, demanding specie, and to refuse to pay taxes. To this appeal was added a declaration that the Soviet would oppose the repayment of foreign loans raised by the Tsarist government at a time when it was waging war against the people. The signatures of the Central Committee of the Peasants' Union and revolutionary parties did not add much to the strength of the manifesto. What were the depositors to do when the bank had no gold or silver? What would the refusal of workers and peasants to pay taxes mean in a country whose budget was based on excise and indirect taxation, mainly from its monopoly of the sale of vodka?

The Financial Manifesto repeated on a larger scale the Soviet's similar appeal to the workers. Since that had failed, what chance of success did this have?

I attended the Soviet session as a guest and could ask to speak only as a representative of the party. But the party had signed the Manifesto. I sat in the rear of the gilded hall, my head bandaged, half dizzy, helpless, and miserable. I also felt that, even if I were able to prove to the delegates that the Financial Manifesto was pure nonsense, I would have no answer to their question: "And what do you recommend instead?"

I was as empty-handed as the others.

In fact, the Manifesto was a confession by the Soviet and revolutionary parties that they stood disarmed before the enemy.

The next morning, December 3, the Financial Manifesto appeared in all progressive and moderate St. Petersburg newspapers. The moderate newspapers printed it partly because of pressure from the printers, who refused to release the papers unless it was carried on the front page. All papers that published the document were suspended the same day.

In the evening the Soviet was called to a meeting in the hall of the Free Economic Society. On my way I stopped at Eugene's